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# Legislative Pre-Session Report

**From Rep. Steve Van Luven - 48th District**

Dec. 3, 1998

*Dear friends,*

*The opening gavel of the 1999 Legislature will strike Jan. 11 to signify the beginning of a scheduled 105-day session in Olympia.*

*The November elections caused a significant shift of power in the Legislature. In addition to controlling the governor's office, Democrats also now will control the Senate. In the House, voters elected an equal number of Republicans and Democrats, which means both parties will share power. It is the first 49-49 tie since 1979, and only the second in state history. Known as a "plurality," this power sharing will likely result in two House speakers. It could possibly result in having two co-chairs of each committee.*

*I currently serve as the chair of the House Trade and Economic Development Committee. Although the details are still being worked out, the split in power may mean that a Democrat could be appointed to co-chair that committee, along with myself.*

*While I'm sure there will be some confusion at first, it will also mean both parties will have to work harder together to find agreements on key issues affecting Washington state, such as education funding, criminal justice, transportation, taxes and the state budget. This pre-session report touches on some of those issues and goals for the 1999 legislative session.*

*If you have questions or comments about the information on this card, or any legislative matter, please contact my office.*

## Rep. Steve Van Luven

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# 1999 session priorities

As the session convenes in January, the Legislature will be addressing various issues important to our state. Here are just a few of my priorities:

## Adopting a responsible budget

This year, a new biennial general fund budget will be written for Washington state. My priority for the budget continues to be funding education. I believe we need to address the issue of class sizes as well as ensuring the dollars we spend for education make it down to the classroom level. Also, many of our local teachers do not receive compensation adequate to enable them to live here on the Eastside. They have to commute outside of the school district to areas where they can afford to live. That's not fair to them or to the students and parents they serve. I believe we need changes in the teacher salary schedule to provide sufficient funding so that our local teachers can afford to live within the school district where they teach.

## Protecting taxpayers

Under Republican control, the Legislature has slowed the growth in state spending to its lowest level in 26 years, created a surplus of more than \$600 million, and reduced taxes by \$2 billion. I believe in spending limits enacted through I-601 by the voters, and I will fight against those who want to repeal these limits. Instead of government growth, we need to put taxpayers first! I am committed toward making better use of your tax dollars by directing resources toward better schools, safer communities, and more government accountability. It's **your** tax money. I believe taxpayers should pay LESS, not more. Like our hard-working families, government should live within its means. The spending limitation forces government to do that. I will work to protect spending limits and preserve your wishes to keep government spending under control.

## Save our parks!

Thanks to many of you who have written to us with your concerns about threats of state parks closures. The state expects to have a budget surplus of more than \$600 million. Dire warnings of revenue shortages for parks and other general fund services are false. Contrary to what the governor says, **not one single park needs to be closed due to budgetary constraints**. I will not stand by and see our valuable state parks and other services sacrificed to political gamesmanship from the governor's office. Instead, I will fight to keep state parks open!



## Addressing transportation needs

With the recent passage of Referendum 49 providing \$2.4 billion for transportation, we will finally get some relief for traffic jams and other problems on the Eastside. My priority will be to ensure that the Eastside receives appropriate resources to address urgent needs.

## Limiting property taxes

Last year, voters approved the property tax measure, Referendum 47. We will be looking at ways to keep property taxes within the limits set by voters and additional means to prevent future assessment spikes.

## Increasing trade opportunities

Washington is the most trade dependant state in the nation. Our ports rank in the top 10 of the busiest ports in the world. As the chairman of the House Trade and Economic Development Committee, I will continue to push for legislation that increases our trade opportunities and brings more jobs to Washington state. When I was first named as Trade and Economic Development Committee chair, I sponsored legislation that provided a tax break for manufacturers looking to expand. It brought hundreds of new jobs to Washington state. I will continue working to keep Washington state competitive in a global marketplace so that we remain number one in trade.

**I WANT  
TO HEAR  
FROM YOU!**

If you have any suggestions, comments, concerns, or ideas for legislation, please contact me. My address is: Rep. Steve Van Luven, 401 Legislative Building, Olympia, WA, 98504-0600. You may also e-mail me at: [vanluven\\_st@leg.wa.gov](mailto:vanluven_st@leg.wa.gov) or call me at 360-786-7848. To save the price of a phone call, you may use the toll-free legislative hotline at 1-800-562-6000.